

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAHORE 00203 201217Z

43

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FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0337

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

UNCLAS LAHORE 0203

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : EAGR, EAID, ENRG, PK

SUBJECT : ELECTRIC POWER

REFERENCE : LAHORE 191

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS STATEMENT BY OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN IN LAHORE, WAPDA LIFTED RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF ELECTRICITY IN PESHAWAR REGION ON FEBRUARY 18. SPOKESMAN SAID WAPDA WAS ABLE TO LIFT PARTIAL BAN DUE TO GRADUALLY INCREASING FLOW OF WATER INTO MANGLA DAM RESERVOIR. HE NOTED THAT PESHAWAR ELECTRICITY REGION COMPRISES PESHAWAR, DERA ISMAIL KHAN AND MALAKAND DIVISION OF FRONTIER.

2. NEW WAPDA CHAIRMAN MAJOR GENERAL SAAD TARIQUE (FORMER PAK ARMY ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF) CONFIRMED SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT TO US DURING COURTESY CALL FEBRUARY 20 AND ADDED "GOOD NEWS" THAT CURBS ON USE OF ELECTRIC POWER THROUGHOUT THE NORTHERN GRID SYSTEM MIGHT BE REMOVED AS EARLY AS TODAY. (ACCORDING TO RADIO THIS AFTERNOON, IT WAS.) HE CITED INCREASE IN MANGLA RESERVOIR LEVEL AS PRIMARY REASON FOR RELIEF FROM TIGHT POWER SITUATION AND ADDED THAT

WAPDA HOPED TO COMMISSION FIRST TWO GAS TURBINE-POWERED ELECTRIC GENERATORS AT LYALLPUR BY FEBRUARY 25. HE EXPECTED REMAINING UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 LAHORE 00203 201217Z

SIX TURBINES AT LYALLPUR TO BE COMMISSIONED WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS,

ADDING SIGNIFICANTLY TO WAPDA RESOURCES.

3. BOTH WAPDA CHAIRMAN AND PUNJAB IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS INFORMED US THAT WATER FLOW INTO MANGLA RESERVOIR HAS INCREASED (DUE PRIMARILY TO MELTING SNOW) TO POINT THAT DAM OFFICIALS HAVE RAISED DISCHARGE RATE TO 15,000 CUSECS. (AT ONE TIME DURING WINTER DISCHARGE DROPPED TO LESS THAN 7,000 CUSECS.) IF CHENAB RIVER FOLLOWS HISTORICAL PATTERN, SITUATION SHOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE STEADILY THROUGHOUT REMAINING PERIOD BEFORE ARRIVAL OF SUMMER MONSOON. GENERAL TARIQUE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT RECENT RAINS (SEE REFTEL) MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR FARMERS TO LESSEN USE OF TUBEWELLS, THUS ENABLING WAPDA TO PROVIDE POWER SAVED TO OTHER CONSUMERS.

4. WAPDA CHAIRMAN BELIEVED HIS ORGANIZATION (AND THEREFORE ENTIRE NORTHERN GRID SYSTEM) WAS OVER HUMP OF CRITICAL ELECTRICITY SHORTAGE THIS SEASON. BARRING UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS AT GENERATOR PLANTS,

HE EXPECTED ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CURVE TO RISE STEADILY. HE ADDED THAT, IF ALL WAPDA PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF GAS TURBINE PLANTS ARE IMPLEMENTED, ELECTRICITY SUPPLY SITUATION SHOULD REMAIN GOOD IN YEARS TO COME. HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT ABOUT RELIABILITY OF EQUIPMENT AT GUDDU POWER STATION -- WHICH MAKES COMPLETION OF GAS TURBINE PLANT AT MULTAN ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT (SEE ISLAMABAD 1405).

5. SINCE MANGLA DAM IS PRIMARILY IRRIGATION FACILITY IT WILL BE EVIDENT FROM ABOVE THAT SUPPLY OF WATER TO PUNJAB CANAL SYSTEM HAS IMPROVED. IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS TELL US THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY INCREASED WATER SUPPLY IN CANALS FROM 55 TO 70 PER CENT. THIS SHOULD GIVE FURTHER BOOST TO PROSPECTS FOR GOOD CURRENT RABI CROP.
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